



# **Housing for All – Cohousing/Co-living in Alexandria**

April 20, 2021

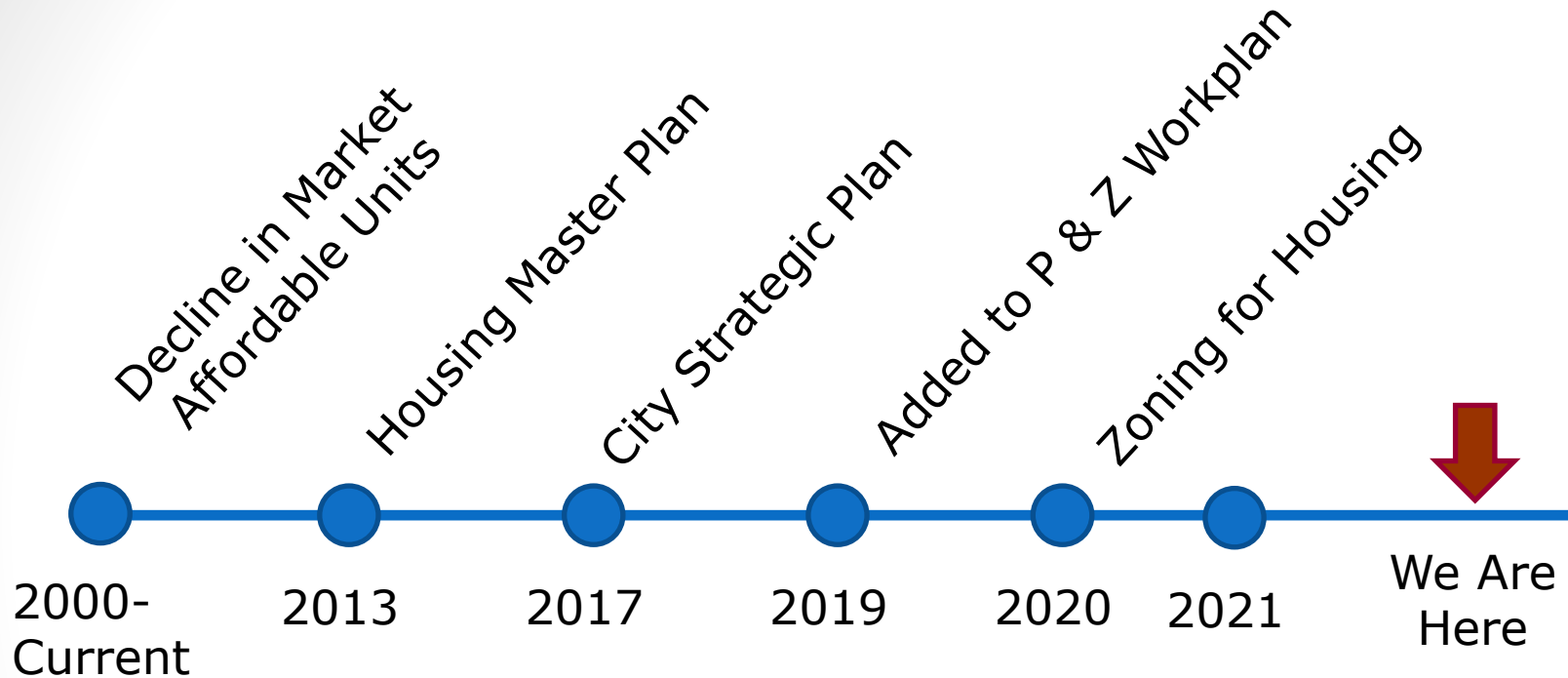
Department of Planning & Zoning  
Virtual Public Meeting II

# What is Co-living?

- Co-living generally offers tenants a private bedroom suite as well as access to communal areas like kitchen and living spaces. Suites do not include separate cooking facilities and may or may not have a private bathroom.



# Why Research Co-living?



All  
Incomes



All Ages



Diversity



# MOST LOW-INCOME RENTERS IN ALEXANDRIA

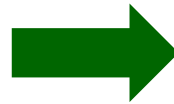
(w/incomes up to \$50,000)

## SPEND TOO MUCH ON HOUSING

# \$31.25/hr

(~\$65,000/yr)

Approximate hourly wage needed in 2020 to rent an average studio apartment (\$1,625) in the City (rent assumed to equal 30% of gross income)



Fast Food Worker: \$12.65

Housekeeper: \$14.13

Costco Hourly Employee (starting): \$16.00

Bank Teller: \$17.22

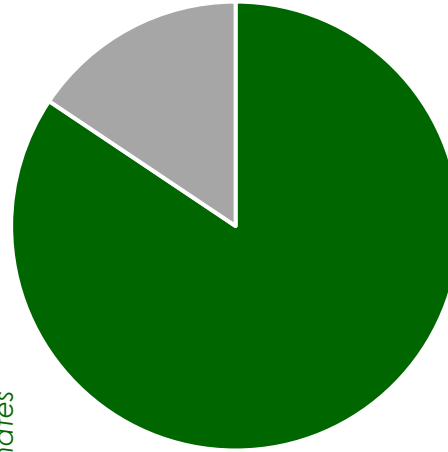
Pharmacy Technician: \$18.35

ACPS Bus Driver: \$19.34 (Grade 3)

Interior Designer: \$28.04

Heating and Air Mechanic and Installer: \$29.54

Source: 2015--2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



10,201 households

APPROXIMATE CITY INVESTMENT NEEDED TO CONSTRUCT ONE NEW AFFORDABLE UNIT IN 2020

**\$80-\$95k**



**Up to \$270k**





# Regional Jurisdictions

## District of Columbia

*Admin SUP, SF/MF & Mixed Use\*  
subject to development conditions  
(see notes for details).*

## Montgomery County

*Use by 3 or more unrelated adults.  
Not to exceed 4 adults except for  
cases with persons with disabilities.*

*Rented on min. monthly basis.*

*May be allowed with full hearing  
SUP in R-1 thru 3, commercial, and  
multifamily zones.*

## Arlington County

*Not allowed by-right anywhere.*

Lodging 3+ not to exceed nine.

*May be appropriate in some  
multifamily settings with full-  
hearing SUP. Not allowed in SF or  
Commercial zones.*

## Fairfax County

Sect. 2-502 family definition  
applies limited to 4 unrelated  
adults, group homes, etc. except  
persons with disabilities.

# Co-living Around the Country



Jurisdictions with co-living policies:

- Salt Lake City
- Denver
- Neighboring Jurisdictions

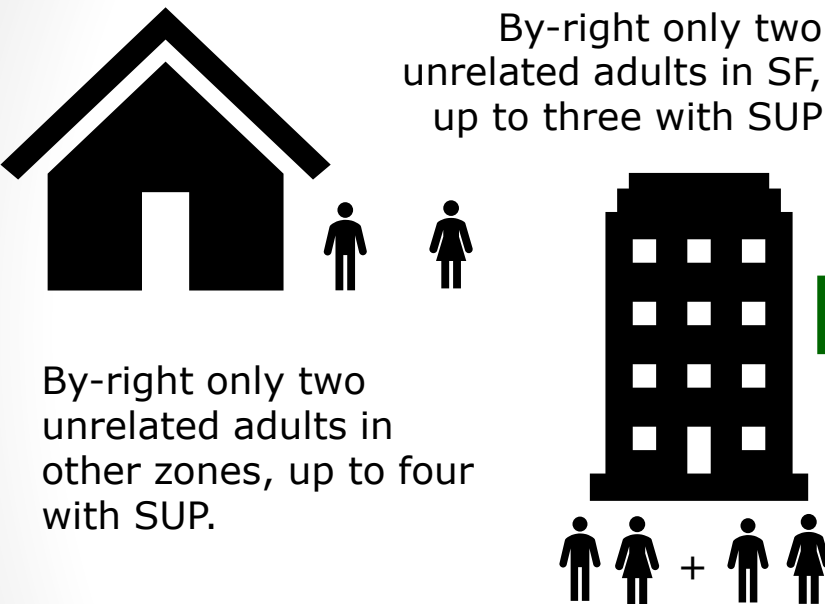


# Salt Lake City Case Study

- Redefine the use, add flexibility
- Expand the number of zoning districts where use is allowed.
- Property management 24/7 & communal areas (except bathrooms) must be continuously monitored
- Shared housing will be subject to the same lot and bulk requirements as multi-family dwelling use, but not the density requirements of the underlying zone

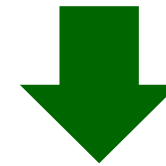
# Denver Case Study

## Current Policy



## Initial Policy Proposal

8 unrelated adults in up to 1,600sqft. + additional resident per 200sqft. Includes both common and shared spaces. Consistent with HUD.



## Considering a Compromise

Increasing from 2 people to only 4-6 rather than 8 originally proposed in SF zones. Other zones cap total number of residents to 10 adults. Include an admin permitting process rather than By-right.

Dwelling type and zone district	Number of Unrelated Adults Allowed		
	Current Regulations	With Zoning Permit Review for Rooming and/or Boarding Home Occupation Accessory Use	Proposed Change
Single unit dwelling use - all SU zone districts	2	3	8
Single unit dwelling use - all other zone districts	2	4	8
Two-unit and multi-unit dwelling uses - all zone districts	4	6	8

Table 2. Impacts of Household Definition Changes to the Number of Unrelated Adults Allowed



# Alexandria Survey Results

# Survey Response Demographics



- 123 Responses
- 13% of respondents said co-living is an option they or a family member might consider. Another 16% said maybe but needed more information.

76%



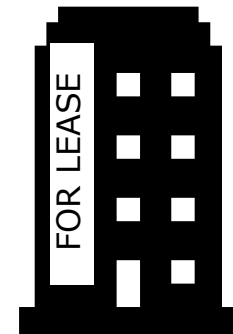
Homeowners

9%



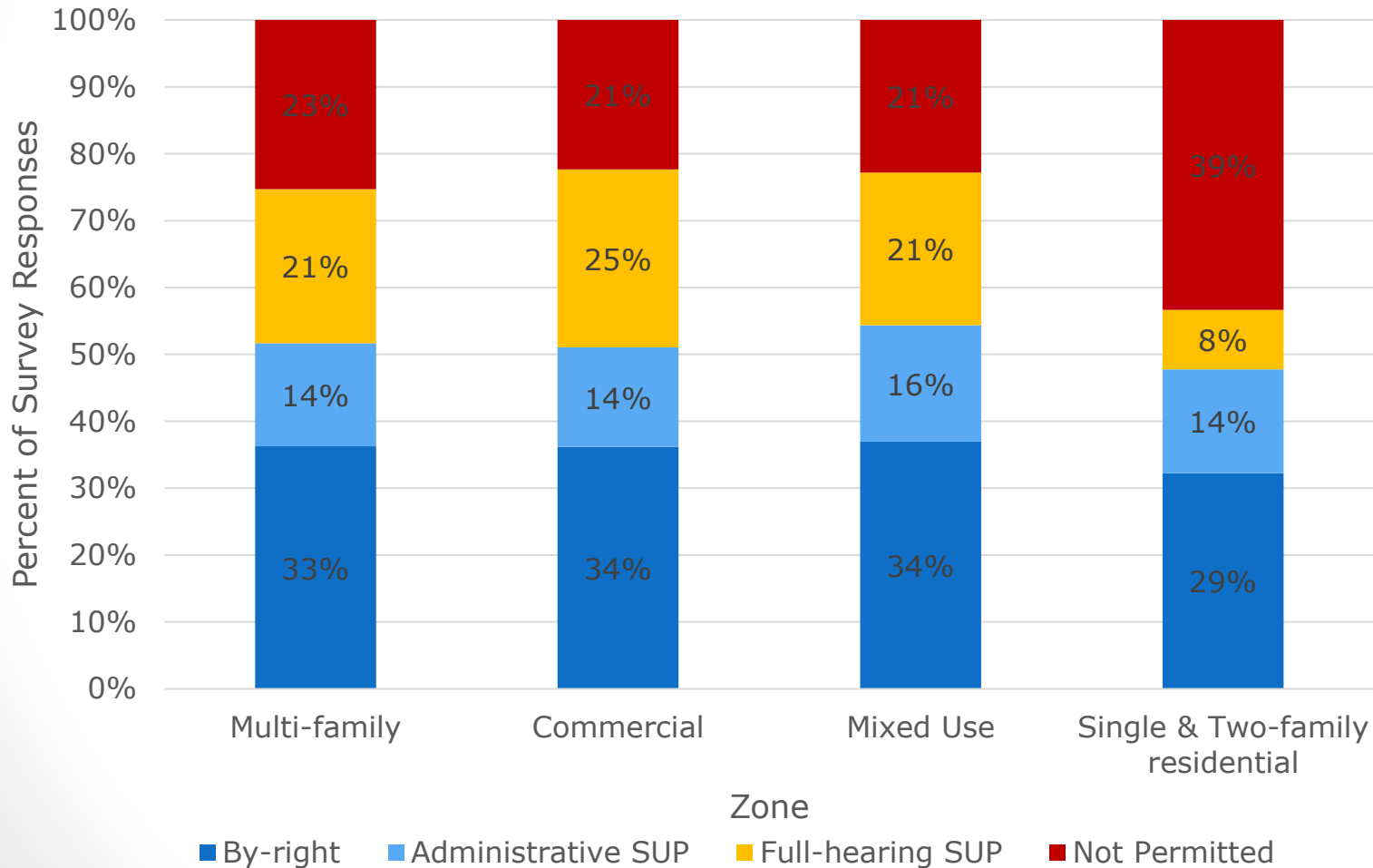
Renters without  
roommates

12%



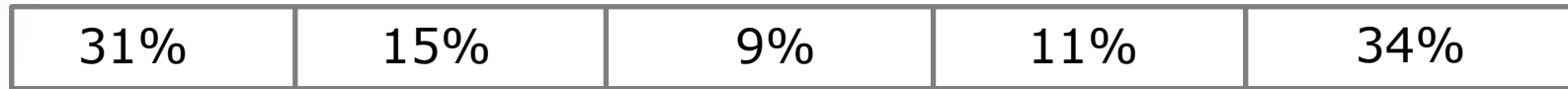
Renters with  
roommates

# Locating Co-living & Level of Review Required



# Community Support by Zone

*Multifamily:*



*Strong Support*



*Moderate Support*



*Neutral*

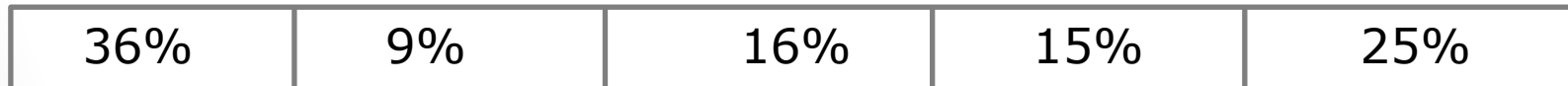


*Moderately Oppose*



*Strongly Oppose*

*Commercial:*



*Strong Support*



*Moderate Support*



*Neutral*



*Moderately Oppose*



*Strongly Oppose*



# Community Support by Zone

*Mixed-Use:*



32%	12%	12%	15%	29%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----



*Strong Support*



*Moderate Support*



*Neutral*



*Moderately Oppose*



*Strongly Oppose*

*Residential (Single-family, two-family, townhouse):*



31%	12%	--	8%	48%
-----	-----	----	----	-----



*Strong Support*



*Moderate Support*



*Neutral*



*Moderately Oppose*



*Strongly Oppose*

# Benefits & Concerns from Survey

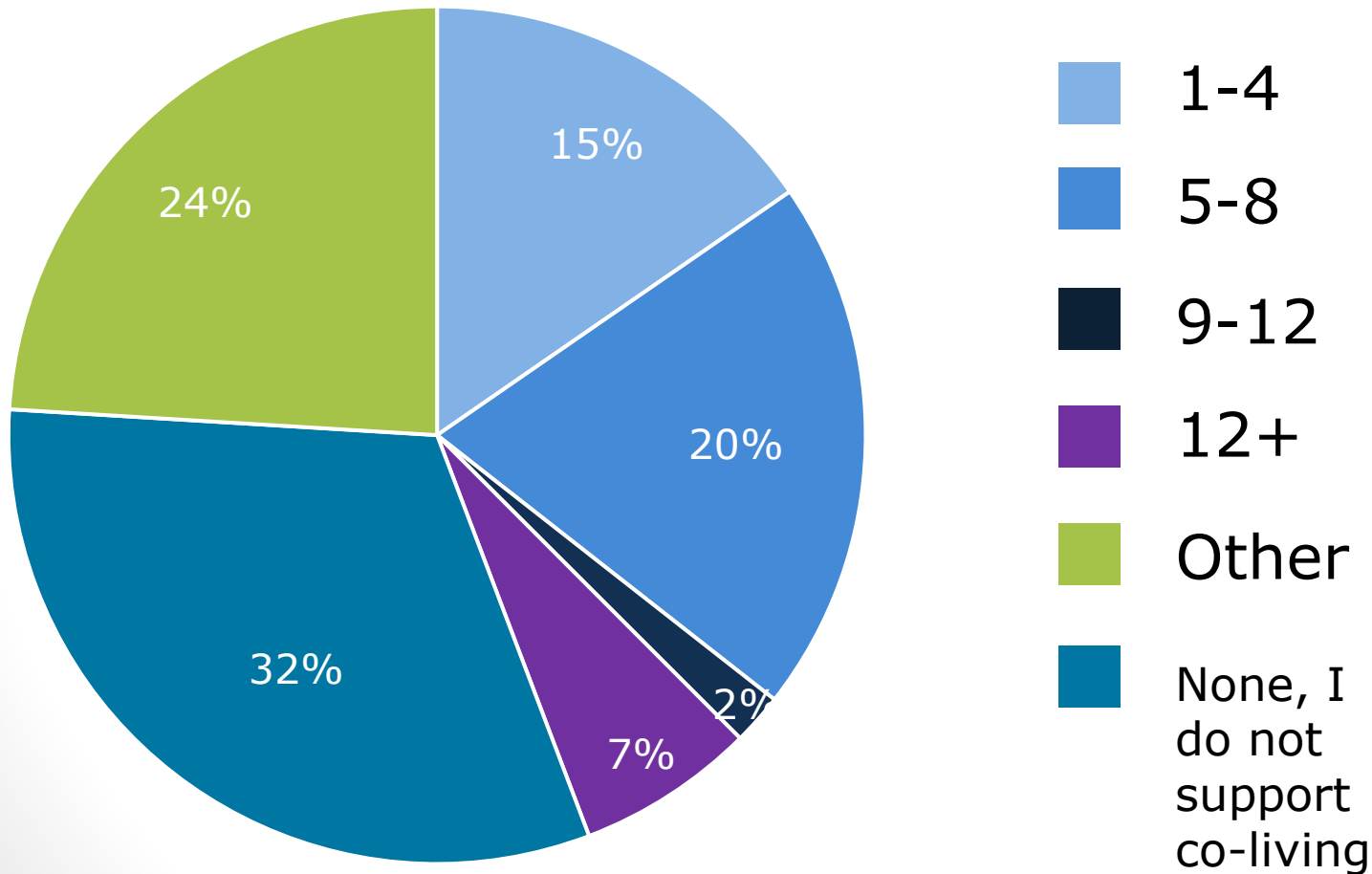
## *Benefits:*

- *Housing affordability for ALL*
- *More equitable*
- *Improve ease of finding suitable housing*
- *Less bureaucracy involved in review process*
- *Freedom of choice*
- *Environmentally friendly*

## *Concerns:*

- *Overcrowding*
- *Fire & Code compliance (safety)*
- *Insufficient enforcement mechanisms*
- *Property maintenance*
- *Rules applied inequitably*
- *Insufficient infrastructure - water, trash collection, transportation, schools*
- *Nuisance – Noise, traffic, parking, potential crime*
- *Length of stay/Use as short term rentals*
- *Unscrupulous landlords*
- *Increased review time*
- *City density*

# Community Sentiment on Number of Residents Allowed in Co-living





# **PROPOSED CO-LIVING RECOMMENDATIONS**



# Proposed Definitions

Co-living unit - A portion of a building containing 6 or fewer *housing suites*. *The total occupancy within each unit is not to exceed a total of 8 people*. If a proposal includes more than two co-living units on the property it will require a full-hearing Special Use Permit (SUP).

Suite, housing - A private living space rented to a tenant within a co-living unit. A suite must include a bedroom(s) but may include a private bathroom. Each bedroom within a suite is limited to a maximum of two people. Cooking facilities may not be provided within a suite.

Co-living – A residential use which offers tenants a private bedroom/bathroom suite as well as access to communal areas like kitchen and living spaces. The shared living space provided must be for exclusive use by tenants within the co-living unit.



# Co-living FAQ's

Will this proposal place additional limitations on my ability to rent out a spare bedroom in a single-family neighborhood?

No, property owners in SF zones are already permitted to have up to 4 unrelated adults living in a house by-right under the definition of Family. This right will NOT be impacted by the proposed changes nor will there be any additional review beyond what is currently required.

# NO CHANGES PROPOSED

Zone	Currently	Co-living
<b>Residential Zoning</b>		
ALL Townhouse Zones - RM, RB, RS, RT (Sec. 3-1103, 3-703, 3-1203, & 3-1303)	●	●
ALL other single-family and two-family zones	X	X

Note - Existing definition of **family** will remain.

Including by-right use for:

- Any number of related people plus two unrelated adult tenants
- 4 or fewer unrelated adults
- 2 unrelated adults plus their children
- State regulated groups

- Require full-hearing SUP

X Not Permitted

# Co-living Proposal

CURRENTLY

- There are no zones in which co-living is currently allowed without a full-hearing Special Use Permit.

## ADMIN SUP

PROPOSED

- All commercial, all high/medium density residential, multifamily, mixed-use, and office zones.

### Conditions

- Up to 2 co-living units (ie. up to 12 suites/bedrooms) on a property.
- Parking requirements (see Parking for details)
- Owner Occupancy or Designated Manager
- Notification to immediately adjacent property owners





# Admin SUP Proposed Locations

Zone	Currently	Co-living
<b>Residential Zoning</b>		
RCX/Medium density apartment zone (Sec. 3-803)	●	▲
RA/Multifamily zone (Sec. 3-603)	●	▲
RC/High density apartment zone (Sec. 3-903)	●	▲
RD/High density apartment zone (Sec. 3-1002)		
<b>Commercial Zoning</b>	●	▲
CG/Commercial general (Sec. 4-403)	●	▲
CD/Commercial downtown (Sec. 4-503)	●	▲
CD-X/Commercial downtown (Old Town North) (Sec. 4-603)	●	▲
CL/Commercial low, CC/Commercial community, CSL/Commercial Service Low (Sec. 4-103, 4-203, 4-303)	●	▲

● Requires full-hearing SUP

▲ Allow with Admin SUP



# Admin SUP Proposed Locations

Zone	Currently	Co-living
<b>Residential Zoning</b>		
RCX/Medium density apartment zone (Sec. 3-803)	●	▲
RA/Multifamily zone (Sec. 3-603)	●	▲
RC/High density apartment zone (Sec. 3-903)	●	▲
RD/High density apartment zone (Sec. 3-1002)		
<b>Commercial Zoning</b>		
CG/Commercial general (Sec. 4-403)	●	▲
CD/Commercial downtown (Sec. 4-503)	●	▲
CD-X/Commercial downtown (Old Town North) (Sec. 4-603)	●	▲
CL/Commercial low, CC/Commercial community, CSL/Commercial Service Low (Sec. 4-103, 4-203, 4-303)	●	▲
	●	▲

● Requires full-hearing SUP

▲ Allow with Admin SUP

# Admin SUP Proposed Locations (Cont.)



Zone	Currently	Co-living
<b>Commercial Zoning</b>		
NR/Neighborhood Retail (Arlandria). Upper Floors (Sec. 4-1404)		▲
KR/King Street Urban Retail. Upper Floors. (Sec. 6-702)	●	▲
<b>Mixed Use Zoning</b>		
CRMU-L/Commercial residential mixed-use (low) (Sec. 5-103)	●	▲
CRMU-M/Commercial residential mixed-use (medium) (Sec. 5-203)	●	▲
CRMU-H/Commercial residential mixed-use (high) (Sec. 5-303)	●	▲
CRMU-X/Commercial residential mixed-use (Old Town North) (Sec. 5-403)	●	▲

● Requires full-hearing SUP

▲ Allow with Admin SUP

# Admin SUP Proposed Locations (Cont.)



Zone	Currently	Co-living
<b>Commercial Zoning</b>		
OC/Office Commercial (Sec. 4-803)	●	▲
OCH/ Office Commercial High (Sec. 4-1103)	●	▲

● Requires full-hearing SUP

▲ Allow with Admin SUP



# Co-living Proposal

CURRENTLY

- All zones in which this is allowed currently require a full-hearing Special Use Permit.
- All zones where use is permitted but the proposal exceeds the maximum number of units under an Admin SUP.

## Full-Hearing SUP

PROPOSED

### Conditions

- Greater than 2 co-living units on a single property
- Parking requirements
- Designated Manager
- Public hearings

# **Proposed Co-living Conditions for Administrative Special Use Permit**

# Analysis for Number of People per Unit

## *Proposal*

*\*Up to two co-living units in certain zones with admin SUP (ie. up to 6 suites per unit). Greater than two units requires full-hearing SUP.*

*Max 2 people per bedroom  
(also subject to building code for sq ft requirement per person)*

*\*Total occupancy within each unit is not to exceed a total of 8 people.*

**Current maximum living together is 4 unrelated adults.**

ALL building codes apply. For example,

Suites/bedrooms require 70sqft per bedroom/person + 50sqft for double occupancy room (Section 304). Minimum 120sqft. Plus an additional square feet of living space per person.

# Analysis for Transit Proximity & Parking Requirement

## *Proposal*

*1 Parking space per 4 suites/bedrooms. Max. 3 spaces required. Same as current requirement for use.*

## *Considerations to Balance:*

- Requiring parking increases rental costs and may impede development altogether*
- Low-moderate income adults less likely to own a vehicle*
- Proximity to transit make car-ownership less of a need*
- Community desire to preserve available on-street parking*
- Requirements consistency with similar uses*

*"The City of Alexandria will continue to use policy to unbundle the cost of parking from housing in order to reduce the cost burden of parking on non-vehicle owners."*

*~Alexandria Mobility Plan Draft*

# Analysis for Property Maintenance

## *Proposal*

*Management & maintenance requirement the same as all residential property.*

## *Considerations to Balance:*

- *Community desire for ongoing property maintenance*

# Analysis for Length of Rental Agreement

## *Proposal*

*Require minimum 30-day  
lease agreements*

## *Considerations to Balance:*

- *Less than this timeframe falls into the Short-Term Rental category*
- *Equity considerations, requiring longer lease agreements may price certain groups out of market*
- *Increases property owner flexibility*
- *Community desire for residents to be less transient*

# Analysis for Signs

## *Proposal*

*Condition of SUP limited to size allowed in residential sign standards. Only when actively marketed and advertised for lease.*

## *Considerations to Balance:*

- *Community desire to limit number of signs, size, and duration*
- *Consistency with sign standards for similar residential uses*



# Analysis for Notification

## *Proposal*

*Condition of SUP applicant must show proof of written notice to immediate neighbors.*

## *Considerations to Balance:*

- *Community desire to be informed when such uses are proposed – even if proposal is reviewed administratively*
- *More predictability for applicants – project meets all standards then the use is authorized (larger projects with full-hearing review still subject to Council discretion)*

# Project Timeline



# Community Engagement

- Please provide feedback via the online survey (closes May 18). The survey will be posted to the project website.
- An email with a link to follow-up survey will go out after presentation.
- Community presentations will be available upon request.

# Comments, Questions, Suggestions?

Contact: Alexa Powell, Urban Planner  
[alexa.powell@alexandriava.gov](mailto:alexa.powell@alexandriava.gov)

## Upcoming Dates:

Initial Recommendations Survey

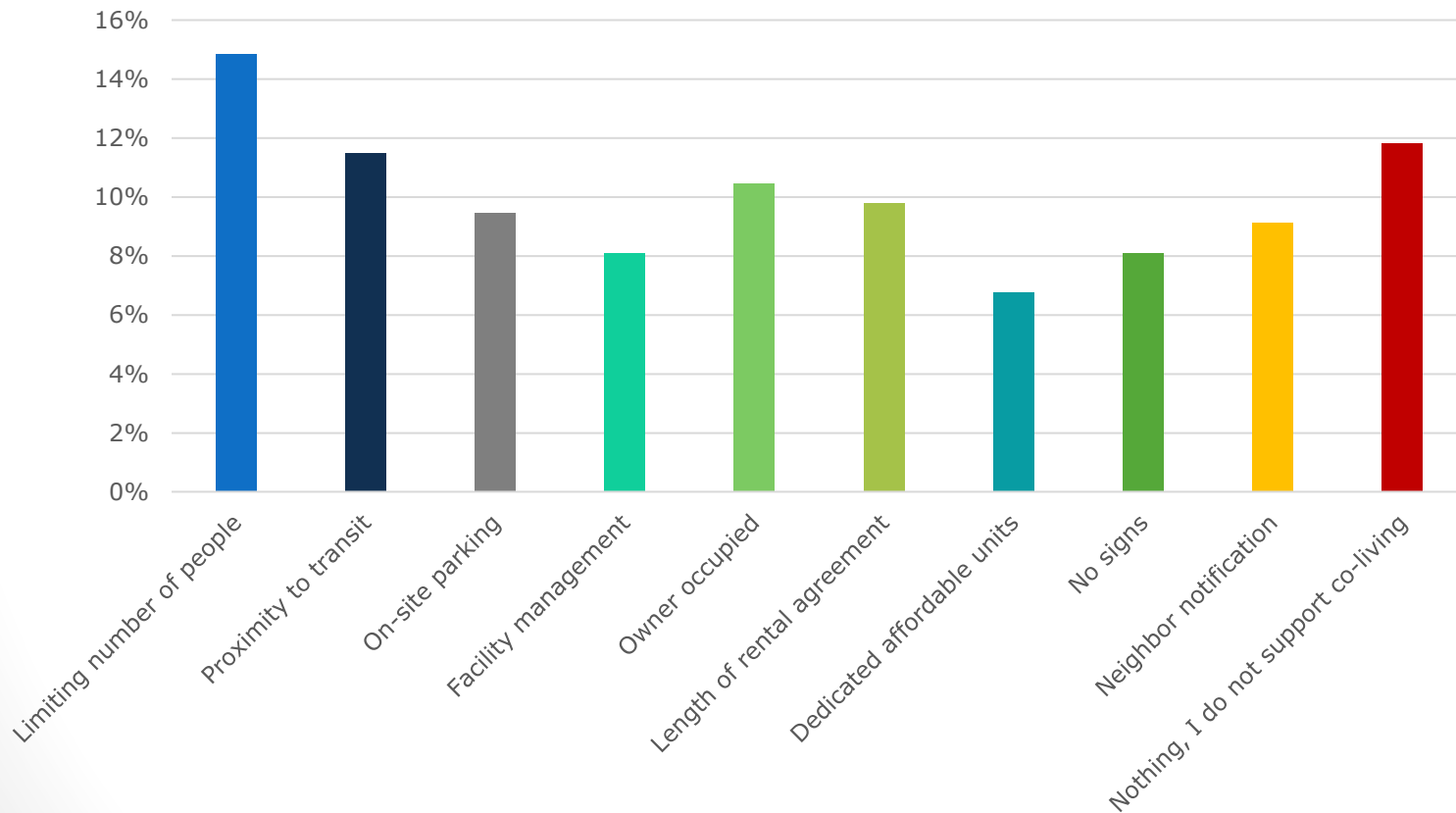
April 20-May 18

Final Staff Report & Recommendations Released

June 11, 2021

# Conditions to Consider for Co-living

What conditions would MOST likely increase your support for allowing co-living?



# Survey Respondent “Deal Breakers”

- *Locating in single-family neighborhoods*
- *MUST place limits the number of tenants (max 2 bedroom)*
- *Professional property management*
- *Need ongoing maintenance*
- *Mechanism to ensure compliance with code standards*
- *Segregating Alexandria by income by only allowing in non-residential zones*
- *Should change the terminology use co-living instead*
- *Need to provide for tenant/resident safety*
- *Lack of enforcement*
- *Making it by-right*

# Themes we heard from the community...

